

7. By proclaiming the Sovereign Gospel

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Preacher: William Philip

[0 : 0 0] Well, if you'd turn with me in your Bibles to Acts chapter 4, page 912 in the Church Bibles, which is all about faith facing hostility.

We were remarking on Wednesday evening at our prayer meeting that so often, just in the midst of times of real blessing and real opportunity, extraordinary hindrances appear and can frustrate and sometimes it seems almost destroy the work of Christ.

Or is that just a coincidence? Well, no, of course not. And the New Testament plainly teaches us otherwise. In fact, the New Testament tells us it is an inevitability that that should be the case.

Paul writes to the Corinthian church from Ephesus, where, do you remember, his city center ministry was flourishing. He wrote and said this, A wide door for effective work has opened unto me, and there are many adversaries.

1 Corinthians 16, verse 33. And these two things always go together, and that is because we, as Christian people, as the Christian church, the people of the Lord Jesus, we have an enemy.

[1 : 2 8] And it's been that way since the very beginning of the church. John Stott, in his commentary on the book of Acts, says this, If the chief actor in the story in Acts chapter 1 and 2 is the Holy Spirit, then the chief actor in chapters 3 to 6 almost seems to be Satan.

I'm glad he says almost, because Satan, of course, is never the chief actor. But his opposition to the church does certainly come to the fore in these chapters that we're going to be studying.

The filling of the Holy Spirit that marks Pentecost is then met by others who are filled with another power, that of Satan himself. In fact, Peter uses exactly that phrase in chapter 5, verse 3 of Ananias, filled by the devil.

And so what we see in these chapters is, in fact, the apostolic church facing extreme hostility. And Luke is careful to show us the many and varied strategies of our enemy that he uses against the church.

In varied ways, he attacks both the church's gospel identity and the church's gospel purpose to make Jesus known in the world. And he attacks the church both from within and from without.

[2 : 5 0] So here in chapter 4, as we read, and also in the first half of chapter 5, the threats come from without, to undermine the kingdom message of the lordship of the risen Jesus over the whole world.

But then we'll see in the first part of chapter 5, and likewise the first part of chapter 6, the threat comes differently. It comes from within, to undermine the kingdom life of the church, the lordship of Jesus over his church, to destroy its life through hypocrisy in chapter 5, Ananias and Sapphira, and grumbling in chapter 6.

Satan is always attacking the church's belief to silence its message and attacking the church's behavior to sully its life. And that's the way he wants to discredit Jesus Christ and his kingdom in our world.

And Luke, you see, is carefully recording this for us so that we can see and find encouragement in how the early church responded to these threats and overcame them through the power of the Holy Spirit and did fulfill their calling of mission to the world.

And he wants us to see two things, and he wants to teach us two things. Firstly, I suppose, to be encouraged by the example of the early church and to be encouraged to see, as they saw, that the certain promise of Jesus is always true and still true today, despite every threat and hindrance.

[4 : 15] I will build my church, and not even the gates of hell will stand against it. He wants to encourage us. But he also wants us, I think, to emulate the apostolic church so that we will respond to threats as they did.

Because that actually is the way that Jesus will build his church and so fulfill his promise, as the church responds in faith and in the Spirit's power.

And what Acts chapter 4, that we've read together today, teaches us is very plain. Faith faces such hostility and overcomes it and triumphs when it's a faith that does two things.

Firstly, it proclaims boldly the sovereign gospel, proclaims Jesus' name. That's the first part of the chapter that we read, verses 5 to 22. And when it's faith that likewise prays boldly to the sovereign God.

It prays in Jesus' name. That's verses 23 through to 31. It all belongs together as one passage, and there's a clue there in the key words.

[5 : 21] I hope you noticed when I was reading. You'll see that there's a kind of bracket in verse 5 and then at the end in verse 31, where there's this key phrase, gathered together.

Synagogy. That's where the word synagogue comes from, to gather together. And it's an ironic bracket, isn't it? Because it begins with the gathering of enemies. The synagogue of Satan, we could say.

That's what Revelation 2.9 calls such a thing. A gathering of enemies to silence the church. But it ends, if you look at verse 31, with a gathering of the church, having silenced the enemies, to go on speaking boldly the word of God.

A great turnaround, isn't it? But there's too much for us really to learn here, to do all of this chapter in one go, so we're going to have two Sundays on it. And I want to see today that faith faces hostility by proclaiming boldly the sovereign gospel of God and none other.

by speaking boldly in Jesus' name and no other name. So let's look at verses 5 to 22, which I think breaks into four little scenes.

[6 : 29] Firstly, verses 5 to 8, the gathering threats to the truth. Then in verses 9 to 14, the glad testimony of Peter to the truth. And verses 15 to 20, the grotesque twisting of the truth by the enemies.

And finally, the last two verses, 21 and 22, the glorious triumph of the truth. So first look at verses 5 to 8, gathering threats to the truth.

And the message here is all about the prosecution of the enemies and the promise of Jesus. Verse 5 tells us, they were gathered together in Jerusalem, rulers and scribes and elders and all the priestly bigwigs.

As I've said, it's a key phrase and we'll think more about that next time. But Luke uses it very deliberately to ring bells in our minds. Remember this is part two of his book. He assumes we've read part one of his book.

That's normally what you do before you read part two, isn't it? And Luke's gospel is the first part of the two-volume work, Luke and Acts. And so if we have, we will remember that this is a very familiar phrase.

[7 : 37] So in Luke 22, verse 2, we read this, now the chief priests and the scribes were seeking how to put Jesus to death. A little later on, verse 66 of the same chapter, the assembly of the elders and the people gathered together, the chief priests and the scribes, and they led Jesus away to their council.

We know what that led to, don't we? Jesus was abused and beaten and tortured and then crucified. So this gathering of the prosecutors was a very menacing one.

It was meant to intimidate, to terrorize the apostles into silence. And the threat of violence was very real. They knew that. It must have been very frightening. They were imprisoned.

There was no legal aid. There was no defense counsel. They were at the mercy of a hostile and very violent authority. It wasn't a very auspicious start to their mission, was it?

Just think if we sent out a missionary couple from our church today and immediately the first news we heard that they'd been thrown into prison and were being hauled up before a hostile regime.

[8 : 51] We'd be pretty devastated, wouldn't we? I guess we'd be meeting together and we'd be asking ourselves questions. Were we really foolish to send them there in the first place? That's what was being said in the newspapers the other week, wasn't it?

When that young Christian woman was murdered in Kabul in Afghanistan. She shouldn't have gone there. People shouldn't have sent missionaries to a place so dangerous.

We shouldn't do it again. We might be asking other questions. Has God abandoned them? Have they somehow got out of God's will? Is that why this has happened to them?

You see, these things happen, don't they, today? It's very relevant. It's not ancient history, this. But you see, the answer is clear if we remember, again, Luke's whole book.

We remember, in fact, the whole of Jesus' teaching all through the Gospels. Because this is the kind of thing exactly foretold by Jesus, isn't it? John 16, verse 33.

[9 : 50] In the world, you will have tribulation. And Luke himself has recorded a great deal in his Gospel of Jesus' detailed and very realistic teaching on preparing for Christian mission in the world.

Just recall, for example, what Jesus said would certainly unfold after he goes back to heaven and before his second coming. Luke 21. They will lay their hands on you and persecute you, delivering you up to their synagogues, their gatherings, to prisons.

And you will be brought before kings and governors for my name's sake. You'll be delivered up even by parents and brothers and relatives and friends and some of you will be put to death.

Well, read about Orissa in India today. It's even in the newspapers this week. Read about parts of the Muslim world.

If you have been reading the latest Barnabas Fund news that comes in, there's articles there about Christians in Somalia and Algeria and Iraq who are being delivered up by friends and family members and others, imprisoned, beaten, and some of them put to death.

[11 : 03] And even in our own Western culture, much freer and safer as it is, there is increasingly, not violent, but certainly virulent and vehement opposition to the Christian faith, isn't there?

Real threats are to be expected in Christian mission right to the end. That's Jesus' clear prediction. It's his promise. Whenever a wide and effective door for the Gospel opens, there will be many adversaries.

But you see, Jesus is also true to his promise about what these things will bring. These will be your opportunity to witness, he goes on to say, Luke 21.

Remember this in Luke chapter 12? When they bring you before synagogues and the rulers and the authorities, don't be anxious how you should defend yourselves and what you should say, for the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you should say.

Was Jesus true to his word? Look at verse 8. Facing the threatening prosecution of the gathered enemies of God and the Gospel, then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them.

[12 : 22] The Holy Spirit gave him words and clarity and power and he witnessed to the Lord Jesus Christ. You see, the Lord Jesus keeps his promise.

He will give the words, he'll give the power and he'll give the witness when his people stand for him and when they face up because of that to real hostility. Isn't that encouraging?

By the way, he's not talking here about preachers. Some idiots have thought that's what he means. It may feel like when you're a preacher you're standing before a hostile audience gathered against you, but Jesus isn't saying that whenever you preach the Gospel you don't need to prepare, you just open your mouth and God will put something into it.

I've listened to preachers who think that and I've wished that God would shut their mouth and take it away very quickly again. No, but what he is saying is that when faith faces real hostility, when there's an urgent need, when we find ourselves in a difficult situation and there's real opposition to the Gospel, then Jesus will not desert us.

He will give us words and speech to bear witness. Isn't that encouragement to you when you face a really difficult situation perhaps at work or at school because of your Christian commitment, real hardship, maybe even danger?

[13 : 45] Now Jesus says it's an opportunity for witness and my spirit will not desert you. It will make you eloquent to stand up for me. Of course, it's also a challenge as well, isn't it?

If we are praying for opportunities to witness, as I hope we are, we might actually be praying for gathering threats against us, for situations of difficulty and danger, mightn't we?

Jesus says these will be your opportunities for witness. But fear not, he says, I will give you the words you need. Well, what were the words he gave to Peter?

Well, verses 9 to 14 are all about his glad testimony to the truth about Jesus. And these verses make very clear the proclamation of the apostles and also the predicament of his enemies.

Notice what Peter does talk about and what he doesn't talk about. He doesn't immediately focus on himself and the others who have been wronged and start a petition for the better treatment of prisoners and demanding justice and so on.

[14 : 50] He could have done that. He'd have been quite right to do so and justify. Now, Peter obviously remembers Jesus' words that said, this will be your opportunity to witness. And so he does just that.

He witnesses to Jesus. And notice his boldness. He's unafraid, isn't he, to go on the front foot right away. Look at verse 9. He immediately exposes the dishonesty of his enemies.

This furore, he says, this is not over some crime that's been committed. This is over a good deed to a crippled man. It's about a work of mercy and compassion. It's about a wonderfully positive contribution to your society.

It's something you should be rejoicing in, not criticizing. It's important for us to notice that, isn't it? It's very easy to be cowed these days into thinking we ought to be ashamed of what the gospel has brought to this world.

Because there are formidable opponents who lambast the church, don't they, and Christianity, blaming it for all the ills of the world. It's the church's fault, it says, the subjugation of women and slavery and sexual repression and goodness knows what else.

[15 : 57] What absolute rubbish! We need to stand up as Christians today and say it's good deeds that bring this opposition, not crimes. Don't forget, all you secularists, that virtually everything that we cherish so dearly in our western societies comes out of our Christian heritage, our democracy.

Well, we might have the odd bit of cash in envelopes, we might have the odd bit of yachts in Crete and things like that, but we have vastly, vastly, vastly less corruption in our political system than many, many parts of the world, those that have no Christian heritage.

In our justice system, would you rather be tried in this country or in Algeria or in China or our state institutions, our whole concept of charity and welfare and so on.

It was Christians who gave us all of these things. It was Christians in the time of the Roman Empire who first built homes and orphanages to rescue abandoned children.

It was Christians who promoted health care and hospitals and the hospice movement and many, many other things besides. It was Christians who lobbied for decades to abolish the slave trade, who reformed the prisons, who stopped child exploitation in this country.

[17 : 24] So let's be like Peter. Let's not let the enemies of the gospel get off too lightly with their nonsense because if Christianity was a cause of crime and blight in our society, it's the absolute reverse. It's concerning good deeds that we're on trial for the gospel today just as Peter was.

So Peter was bold. He was on the front foot because he is confident in the sovereign gospel of God and its power to heal and to change a sinful world.

And therefore, he is unashamed to proclaim the same full-on gospel with all its offensiveness to the powers that be in the world and in the worldly religious establishment.

It would have been very easy, wouldn't it, for Peter to soften his message, to focus on all the things they have in common, to be more ecumenical, more inclusive, more tolerant and accommodating.

Let's work together, Peter could have said. We're all really part of the same religion. Let's work together. It would have been very easy for him to just talk about churchy things and institutional things.

[18 : 29] Let's talk about the needs of the cripples in Jerusalem. Surely that's a point of contact we can have together. And the priests and the elders would have said, great, come and join our committee, Peter.

It's always good to have an evangelical voice. We really value your input. Peter and John and the elders would have got out of jail and they'd have thought to themselves, great, we're going to be able to get into the establishment and have some influence here and change the nation that way.

And the priests and the scribes would have gone off laughing. We've got them now. A bit of recognition, a bit of appeal to their pride and that will soon silence them. Well, it's always been a favourite tactic of the established denominations to muzzle the evangelical gospel.

And alas, too many too often have fallen for it and have been silenced that way. But no, Peter wasn't taken in like that. He wasn't frightened. He remembered Jesus' words, didn't he?

Not to be afraid of the one who could merely harm the body, but to fear the one who will judge for eternity, to fear God. So he didn't muzzle the gospel to save his own skin.

[19 : 37] No, he was straight onto the unique and exclusive message about Jesus Christ. Verse 10. You asked, he says, so here it is.

Jesus is the power and Jesus is the name that did all this. But he doesn't stop with the fact either, does he? He goes right on with the explanation, what it all means, and also with the implication directly that this has for them, what they must do.

And he pulls no punches. Let's just summarize the two points that Luke gives us as he has done in verse 10 and verse 11. In verse 10 you see Peter says, this Jesus you tried to remove, but God raised him up, whom you crucified, God raised from the dead.

And the proof of all of that is right in front of you because it was the name of the risen Jesus, that is, it was his presence and power that did this mighty sign. And that means, says Peter, this is what he's saying, all your thinking about life and about God is totally wrong, mistaken.

You didn't believe in the notion of resurrection at all. There were Sadducees, the rationalists of the day. They didn't believe in the supernatural. But you're wrong, says Peter. And you thought that you could somehow suppress and destroy the message of Jesus, but that also is absolutely impossible.

[21 : 09] The error of your thinking is totally exposed. And the powerless and the impotence to stand against the truth of God. Well, the communists in the Soviet era found that out, didn't they?

The Nazis, all the others who have tried to remove the gospel of Jesus Christ. This Jesus and his gospel that you tried to remove, God raised up and preserved.

And secondly, verse 11, this Jesus that you rejected as God's Messiah and King, God requires that his name alone is the way by which you must be saved.

You see what he's saying? These people thought they were on God's side, didn't they? They were very religious. But Peter says, no, you're wrong. In every way, you are actually enemies of God.

You rejected the stone that God has made the cornerstone. He's quoting from Psalm 118. In that psalm, God's king is being surrounded on every side by enemies, by the nations of the world.

[22 : 14] He's like a stone that's rejected. And yet, God has a great reversal and he makes him who is rejected to be victor over all his enemies. The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone, the foundation, the anchor of everything.

And you see, what Peter's saying here is this, that these bastions of religious life are in fact enemies of God because they're arrayed against Jesus Christ. In rejecting Jesus Christ, they are rejecting God Almighty.

Now that gives a death blow, doesn't it? to any idea about inclusive religion, any idea of pluralism, that there are many, many ways to God and that in the end all religions are really just the same.

Verse 12 is as plain as a pike staff. Look at it. There is no one else, there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.

Jesus' name is the name and is the only name of salvation. And notice even elders and ministers and priests and high priests must be saved through this name says Peter.

[23 : 31] That's his gospel, it's his glad testimony, his proclamation of an exclusive message. And it was very offensive, very offensive today, especially to religious people, to moral people, to people of religion.

But Peter says there are simply not many ways to God apart from Jesus. In fact, there are not any ways to God apart from Jesus.

People hate that message today just as they hated it then. But you see, for these people that day, their predicament was very acute. Verse 13 says they couldn't gainsay the power of a ministry of men even with no ecclesiastical training.

Nor could they do anything to deny the source. They knew that they'd been with Jesus. Verse 14 tells us nor could they deny the healed man right in front of their nose.

So they were silent. They had nothing to say in opposition. That just reminded me of what Philip Hare told me about a few years ago when through in Edinburgh in Holyrood they were just beginning their building project and it was going before presbytery, the presbytery at the time had been persecuting them because they did not ordain women and making their life very, very difficult.

[24 : 55] It seems that you won't have the presbytery on your back if you want to live in the manse with a civil partner of the same sex but you will for the heinous crime of not ordaining women. But when the proposal for their building development was being read out and approval was sought from the presbytery and normally in these situations a very large sum is called for and churches have all kinds of vague ideas of how they're going to raise it by lottery funding or grants or this or that or the next thing and the presbytery usually and understandably is reluctant to let such things go ahead.

When it was read out and that it was going to cost whatever it was nearly two million pounds there was a bit of a rumble and then the convener of the committee said all the funds required have been pledged in advance by the congregation and there was silence.

No one had anything to say in opposition. No lottery funds no endless fundraisers no fantasies but determined sacrificial Christian giving.

Evidence irrefutable evidence of a people among whom the power of the true gospel had been at work. See the truth that is in Jesus has power and it produces fruit that just can't be gainsaid.

The world may hate it and the religious establishment may hate it but they cannot deny the evidence of real spiritual life and vitality that the true gospel of Jesus Christ produces among people.

[26 : 35] They had nothing to say in opposition. It's a wonderful irony isn't it? They who had gathered together to silence the gospel are utterly silenced. Of course I didn't stop from trying to discredit the truth and verses 15 to 20 show their grotesque twisting of the truth the perversity of the enemies of the gospel and yet the persistence of the apostles in speaking the truth.

You would think wouldn't you that when in verse 15 they confer with one another and say what shall we do they would all get together and sit down and say well we must listen to these men mustn't we? We must recognize the truth that they speak.

We must recognize the evidence that they present which is both rational and real in front of our eyes and we must repent. We must acknowledge our wrong thinking about Jesus.

We must acknowledge our wrong hearts before God and we must seek salvation in Jesus' name. We must throw ourselves on the mercy of Jesus Christ. That's what you'd think they'd say isn't it?

Just as you would think that everyone today who really examines the claim of Jesus and the evidence of the truth that they would do the same. But no that's not what they do is it?

[27 : 50] They can't deny the evidence they admit that verse 60 is public truth everybody knows we can't deny it. But what they say is we still don't want it and we won't have it and we're going to suppress it.

So verse 17 you see they decide again they're determined to intimidate them to silence. So they say to them in verse 18 better keep quiet or else no more speaking or teaching in Jesus' name.

It's always the mark of the loser isn't it? It's always a sign of weakness when you have to resort to suppression intimidation the Nazis burning the books China today banning free access to the internet and so on because access to the truth is powerful because the truth is liberating and you see it's all around us today isn't it?

People don't like certain truths and so they want to suppress them it's going on in our society all the time. Somebody told me just last week that a Christian based education program for sex education for children which simply is factual and simply uses World Health Organization material verbatim a particular issue is about using WHO material that says that condoms for example don't protect 100% against sexually transmitted diseases but that course has been banned from use in Glasgow schools because the health promotion people are so obsessed with their dogma of promoting condoms that they want to suppress the truth that even the World Health Organization tells us that they're not 100% effective and likewise we have similar lobbies who don't want schools to teach in any way that marriage is special in any way over other relationships despite the plain facts that are in the public domain that everybody knows that marriage does make for better and longer and more stable relationships and marriage does make for happier and healthier children and all sorts of other things besides that's just two examples from hundreds do you remember the other week there the atheist suppression of

Christianity in our schools that the director of education and the royal society had to resign because he was intimidated by people like Richard Dawkins and others into silence why because he dared to suggest that when children in a biology classroom might ask their teacher a question about creation the teacher should even answer them rather than say shut up and stop being stupid religion is nonsense and he was intimidated into resigning from the royal society the bastion of truth and inquiry and science that it will not have even a mention of the truth that is in Jesus even to argue about or disagree with far too dangerous well yes it is dangerous of course it is because the truth that is in Jesus is powerful and so societies in their different ways will intimidate to cause silence or they'll accommodate into silence keep your religion in place keep it private not public keep it institutional not inspirational and the world says you can work with us keep to the common ground and you'll be accepted you'll be honored just talk about climate change and charity and poverty and these sort of things talk vaguely about God and we'll have you on the TV and the radio we'll say nice things about you but you need to leave all that exclusive talk about

[31 : 36] Jesus behind all that nonsense about unique revelation and only one way to God we can't have that they charge them not to speak or teach at all verse 18 in Jesus name they can't deny the truth so they try to suppress it just as they did at Jesus resurrection they couldn't deny the empty tomb so they hushed it up and friends that is the real reason that people don't follow Jesus Christ isn't it it's perversity it's the mark of human sin and rebellion Paul puts it that way in Romans chapter 1 they exchanged the truth of God for a lie and served the creature rather than the creator they said I'm in charge in my life I don't care what the evidence is I will not have Jesus Christ in charge of my life and all the evidence in the world won't make me change my mind maybe that's somebody here this morning well you're being just as perverse as the people in this story if that's what you're saying and by the way verse 16 gives a lie doesn't it to the idea that some people have that what we really need in the church today to get people converted is miraculous signs they don't come much better than this one do they the healing of a cripple over 40 years old everybody saw it everybody admitted it it was indisputable and still they would not believe so obviously that's not the answer but what do the apostles do they're not intimidated nor will they accommodate their message or tone it down verse 19 we have no option they say but to keep on proclaiming the sovereign gospel of

Jesus we can't help but speak about what we've seen and heard notice that very important many people today who would say even within the church that we shouldn't go on just proclaiming the gospel as before times have changed they say the post-modern world we need things differently what we need is silent witness not words symbols and pictures and things like that but not words it's fashionable to quote that ridiculous saying spread the gospel by all means possible if necessary use words well words are always necessary and it's just the same as people would be tempted to do understandably in the face of violent threats for example today in militantly Islamic countries a great temptation isn't it to keep silent not to invite trouble but the apostles kept on speaking speaking about what they've seen and heard the evidence and the truth about Jesus silent witness no there's no such thing that is the mark of Satan enemies want to silence the message but speaking words about

Jesus that's the mark of the filling of the Holy Spirit so don't be intimidated see what Luke tells us in these last two verses 21 and 22 it's about the glorious triumph of the truth isn't it what is the result of the apostles persistent proclamation in the face of these threats well these verses speak about two things don't they the power of God and the praise of the people this public recognition of the truth through the apostles bold testimony verse 21 they're praising God for what has happened what has happened of course is verse 4 told us was that many had believed the truth and joined the company of the believers and they're praising God and there's public vindication of the real power of God not just to heal a cripple in his forties but also God's power to use the extraordinary weak things of the world to confound the wise so that even a hostile assault on the church was turned on its head and

God's enemies were utterly frustrated and instead of silencing the church's witness the church's witness just became stronger and more powerful we cannot but speak they said after they'd been in prison has the world changed in 20 centuries do you think no it hasn't changed at least as far as the human heart's response to the gospel is in concern it hasn't changed at all and that means that this is just as relevant for us today doesn't it because we will face hostility in our mission of all different kinds be clear about that Jesus prediction is just the same today we'll face hostile attempts to intimidate or for us to accommodate our gospel for some in some countries today who maybe listen to this on the internet it may very well be violent intimidation but for us often it will be increasingly pressure to tone down our message fit in with what society will be willing to put up with but either way pressure to silence the true sovereign gospel of God to silence the one saving name of

Jesus Christ we mustn't do that we must face hostility by doing exactly what the apostles did boldly proclaiming the unique name of Jesus boldly proclaiming the unique salvation of Jesus and when we do that we also will find the same two things happening we'll find entrenched and perverse refusal of the truth and even more intimidation and suppression that's what will happen it'll be painful it'll be costly and not everybody will be rescued from prison as the apostles were that day page or two on Stephen wasn't rescued he was stoned some of you Jesus said they will put to death but secondly we'll also find that Jesus will always be true to his promises it will be your opportunity to witness he said the power of God will be seen and experienced and there will be people who turn to

[38 : 06] God and who praise him for the wonderful things that he's done in revealing Jesus to them that's always been true the blood of the martyrs has always been the seed of the church the glorious triumph of the gospel of Jesus is a certainty when his people face hostility by proclaiming all the more the unique name of Jesus Christ whether in a post modern world or a Muslim world or a pagan world or any world and that's true friends in a smaller scale way in our own little worlds are much less dramatic daily lives isn't it new testament tells us every true christian will face hostility it's the mark of a true christian believer but you can take encouragement from this chapter in x when you face that at work or at school or at university or even in your family or wherever it is Jesus Jesus won't desert you either he'll give you the words so don't be cowed into silence don't be afraid to speak a word for Jesus he'll give you strength to speak in his name it will be your opportunity for witness so let's encourage one another to remember that shall we faith faces hostility never by silencing but are always by proclaiming sovereign gospel of the lord Jesus christ well let's pray our god and father we thank you that your word is real and truthful that you promise us both wide and open doors of opportunity to proclaim your glorious kingdom but also warn us of our adversary the devil who in so many ways will never cease to come against us teach us and help us we pray to face boldly all such hostility and never be afraid to speak to speak the word in the name of Jesus so help us almighty god for Jesus sake amen